

COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP

Guyana General and Regional Elections

28 August 2006

DEPARTURE STATEMENT BY RATU EPELI NAILATIKAU CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP

Georgetown, 5 September 2006

We have now completed our Report to the Secretary-General on the General and Regional Elections in Guyana. It will be sent to him tomorrow and will be made public shortly.

We will be leaving Guyana today. I therefore wish to make this 'Departure Statement' on behalf of the Group.

Our Interim Statement gave the Commonwealth Observer Group's view of the electoral process in Guyana as at noon on 29 August 2006. We said there that our observations of the voting phase were positive and that up to that point the process had gone well.

We have now considered the results process. Based on our own tracking of the results from the count to the final declaration, we believe that there was no interference or manipulation during that process of transmission. However, while we recognise that the final announcement of the national results was a day earlier than in 2001 the results process was time-consuming and in our view could have been more efficient.

As for our evaluation of the process as a whole, we believe that at these General and Regional Elections the conditions existed for a free expression of will by the electors and that the results reflected the wishes of the people. Overall, we believe that GECOM did a good job and should be commended. We congratulate the people of Guyana for their commitment to the democratic process and for their cool heads at a time of tension. And we commend the political parties for putting the needs of the nation first.

The two most important issues before the Government, GECOM, the political parties and the people of Guyana so far as the election arrangements are concerned are now to reconfigure the way in which the Elections Commission is constituted and to ensure that Guyana has a totally new voters register which commands the confidence of all the people of this country.

Taking a wider view, we urge that the discussion on constitutional, governance and electoral reforms now be taken forward to the stage of implementation. We are sure that action will be taken to address inequality and social exclusion. We hope that the people of Guyana will use their present opportunity to build an approach to politics which unites rather than divides, includes rather than excludes and which builds a sense of collective confidence rather than fear and suspicion. Most of all, to echo the report of the 2001 Commonwealth Observer Group, we urge the people of this country to make a renewed effort to find ways of transcending Guyana's still largely ethnic politics.

We wish the people of this country well – and urgency – as you set out on those tasks. The Commonwealth will be with you, and we are sure that the Commonwealth Secretary-General will provide all the assistance and support that he can.

Georgetown
5 September 2006

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